The start of the new school year is an important period for introducing educators and Education Support Professionals (ESPs) to their professional Association and engaging them in our efforts to unite, inspire and lead.

The Back-to-School Resource Guide is designed to support state and local affiliates in the development and implementation of a successful organizing plan. This guide, and the resources provided at www.nea.org/b2sorganizing, will give you the best practices, sample materials and messaging to run a successful organizing campaign.

GETTING STARTED

As you enter the Back-to-School (B2S) period, Association Leaders should identify someone to lead your B2S Organizing Campaign and identify an Organizing Team to work with your lead.

As the Organizing Lead begins planning efforts, the following steps will help them strategically plan for success:

- Coordinate a meeting and/or conference call with their organizing/recruitment team. Ask them in advance of the call to outline their worksite B2S organizing plan and be prepared to share it with the team.

- Review data from the VAN to help you make informed decisions. Map your buildings in an effort to prioritize membership recruitment and leader identification.

- Identify a member to help craft your B2S message. What are the issues that are most important to potential members in your school? Is it workplace challenges? Time to Learn and toxic testing? Are members struggling with debt from college loans? Use the talking points on our resource page (nea.org/b2sorganizing) to find messaging and resources for these programs and more. Think about a social media strategy to connect members and potential members outside their worksite.

- Set weekly organizing goals and coordinate regular check-ins with your organizing teams and worksite leaders to assess the success of your back to school campaign.

Remember to involve your Association members in your back to school organizing campaign and always ask your team what support and/or resources they need in order to be successful.
FINALIZING A PLAN AND SETTING GOALS

Your membership plan should be based on an analysis of your own membership numbers and be determined by your organizing goals. It should be authentically owned by your organizing team and local leaders. A strong plan should include:

- Goals for new hires and early career educators (0-5 years).
- Goals for the number of members you expect to engage and recruit by worksite and local, as well as individual goals for Association Representatives, or UniServ Director.
- Goals by constituency group (Certified, ESP, Student, Higher Ed).
- Resources required, including coaching support for the team and the leaders.
- Materials (flyers, commitment cards) and messaging direction.

At the conclusion of the B2S campaign, recognize leaders, Association/worksite representatives and other staff who’ve shown exceptional organizing skills that have led the way in growth.
SETTING RECRUITMENT GOALS

The goals set should focus on the B2S period. This includes your new hire events and your continued organizing goals that will take you to the end of the calendar year. The NEA Center for Organizing recommends that affiliates look to a 2% growth strategy for local affiliates.

Here are two examples of how State and Local Associations can calculate their enrollment goals:

**Example 1:** Our Affiliate goal is 2% growth in targeted Locals during the B2S Campaign, which is a total of 200 new members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Association</th>
<th>Current Membership Total</th>
<th>2% Growth Goal</th>
<th>If Goal Is Met, Membership Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunnyside EA</td>
<td>4,443</td>
<td>88 New Members</td>
<td>4,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smithfield EA</td>
<td>2,899</td>
<td>58 New Members</td>
<td>2,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bench ESP</td>
<td>1,943</td>
<td>38 New Members</td>
<td>1,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roma EA</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>16 New Members</td>
<td>848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,117</strong></td>
<td><strong>200 New Members</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,317</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 2:** For all of our locals with less than 80% market share, we want to bring them closer to 80%, with a goal of having them at 80% within the next one to five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Assoc.</th>
<th>Current Membership Total</th>
<th>Current Market Share</th>
<th>Number of Potential Members</th>
<th>Goal for Growth</th>
<th>Goals Met: New Market Share</th>
<th>Goals Met: New Membership Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rose EA</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>22 New Members</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dunkin EA</td>
<td>1,465</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>112 New Members</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>1,577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly ESP</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>19 New Members</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PUTTING YOUR B2S PLAN INTO ACTION

Recruitment Conversations

There will be a lot of new faces in your worksite, and we know that few people join the Association without being asked. In fact, the number one reason new employees don’t join is because we don’t ask them.

NEA membership studies also show that the best person to invite someone to join their Association is a respected colleague. The strongest recruitment programs rely on developing worksite and local leaders who use their own story to share why Association membership matters.

Therefore, the best investment you can make is to continue to meet with worksite leaders; train them on how to have effective one-on-one conversations; provide them with materials that showcase the Association’s work and help them talk about it in an effective manner; provide information on recent victories and member benefits; and send them off to ask new and returning colleagues to join and engage in their professional Association.

Engaging a potential member in a conversation about a key issue they care about, like time to plan, testing, losing positions to privatization, etc is often an excellent path to membership and engagement. Sometimes it’s helpful to have a conversation guide when approaching a potential member about your organizing campaign. Here is a sample “rap”:

(Introduction)

Hi, I’m ____ (introduce yourself) your colleague and I’m very involved with ____ (Association).

(Identify issue/inspiration – open ended questions)

How is the school year going so far? What are you enjoying? What are your challenges? Why did you get involved with education? Are things getting better or worse?

(Agitation – help member/potential member realize that things can only improve by coming together)

(Based on response to open-ended questions) Who makes those decisions? Do you think they know what it’s like to be in the classroom/at school?

For Example

If issue was too much testing: You say there’s been less and less time to adequately do lesson planning and too much time spent on test prep and delivery. What are the other things that you have to do now? How does that affect your students’ education? Who decided that it’s more important to take 4 tests this year?

If issue was legislator/school admin: When’s the last time they were in the classroom?

(The Association Solution)

That’s exactly what educators/ESP all across our local, state and the country are feeling! No, it’s not fair! Do you think you have a better chance of addressing x issue by yourself or by standing together with the thousands of other educators in your school/district/state? That’s right, by standing together. Obviously, we have strength in numbers. We know from experience that when we act collectively through our Association we can achieve things like x issue (more planning time, reduced testing etc). Right now educators, parents and our
communities across the state are coming together to make sure that every student thrives and has access to a great public education.

(Inoculation)

You just told me that you think we have a better chance to address these issues by standing together. How do you think things got this way? Who benefits from it? That’s why we have to come together and across our district/state to say enough is enough – but there are other well-funded special interest groups and for-profit companies that have been trying to take over public education. That’s why we have a strong organization: by coming together, we can take on these special interest groups and achieve x issue so that every student can thrive so that we can make every public school a great place to learn and work.

(Commitment - The Ask)

So you just told me that x is the biggest thing you’d like to change, and that you think we can do it collectively. Do you support standing together with educators across our state by joining x Education Association?

Here’s the membership form.

(Follow-up - Next Steps)

What’s next for this new member? Can you invite them to a beginning of the year social? A 10 minute meeting? A community forum that is coming up? Ask them to engage right away. And set up another time to talk in the very near future to find out more and build this relationship.

Conduct Association Back-to-School Activities

Coordinating back-to-school activities is key for introducing early career educators and new educators to your district on the Association priorities and activities during the new school year. Specifically, these activities are an optimal time to invite members to get involved in Association work and activities. When planning your activities do consider hosting some type of back-to-school activity outside of a district-sponsored event. This will give you more time to interact with new and returning educators.

Preparation Phase

- Contact your Worksite Representatives and Organizing Team and give them a specific role to play at your back-to-school activities.
- Provide notices of the upcoming Association activities via phone calls, emails, site visits, and personalized invitations.
- Pull together your Association organizing materials.
- Contact your local school administration to request a new-hire list.
• Develop a plan to contact new hires before school begins, or make dates to meet the new hires on the first day of school.

• Review the NEA Member Benefits website at www.nea.org/toolsandideas for additional information that can be introduced at your association activities.

Implementation Phase

• Have your organizing team meet prior to the Association-sponsored activity to review roles, goals and organizing issues.

• Have members and/or other leaders on hand to answer questions and ask potential members to complete an Association membership form and commitment card (see commitment card example on pg. 9).

Follow Up After Your Events

• Debrief your Association’s activities with your organizing team and set a follow-up plan or action, which may include both members and potential members. Successful Associations are ones that look for ways to get educators and ESPs involved.
  • Set a plan to contact new hires and returning employees who’ve yet to join.
  • Plan local events around Time to Learn, Degrees Not Debt and other professional issues.

• Remember to develop a calendar to track your Association events and check-ins with your organizers and/or Worksite Representatives during your B2S campaign. Be sure to review the school district calendar for key events to organize around and/or avoid, such as parent-teacher nights and school board meetings.

Resources from NEA’s Center for Organizing

• Does your team need data training? Contact Jessica Garson at c4odata@nea.org if you need assistance.

• Do you need organizing support and/or help developing a strategic message for building outreach? Contact Sarah Markey, Organizing Specialist, at smarkey@nea.org.

• Review back to school resources located at www.nea.org/btsorganizing to view a number of resources that can help engage both new and returning educators.
MESSAGING GUIDE – COMMUNICATIONS

What is the most important thing you want others to know about your Association? This key message is one that you should repeat over and over. This message should be something you can say in conversation or in presentations to new and returning members. It should be easy to remember and say. It may be as simple as:

“OUR PROFESSION NEEDS SMALLER CLASS SIZES” OR “THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A GOOD EDUCATION WITHOUT A QUALITY EDUCATOR.”

Your key message should be used consistently in membership materials, newsletters and other communications. It may also be distilled into a pithy campaign slogan. You will also need three talking points, stories and examples that support your key message, and these may change based on the needs and interests of your audience.

Finally, it is important to note that your Association should allocate some time during the planning period to develop a brief list of all your Association’s accomplishments from the start of the school year. Below is a sample of a messaging guide followed by a sample organizing flyer:

Introduce Your Association

• As a member of your Local Association, you automatically become part of your State Association and join thousands of other educators in your state. It doesn’t stop there - your membership also includes national representation through the National Education Association.

• Our members include public school employees whose positions require a teaching credential or license, education support professionals, as well as college students studying to become educators, higher education faculty and retired educators.

• Your membership connects you to more than 3 million public school employees across the nation, and it allows you to draw upon the tremendous experience and expertise of fellow educators.

Benefits of Membership

• Our affiliate is proud of its role as the preeminent voice of public education. Our members are professionals who work with students and communities on a daily basis. Because of our vital role, it is very important that members’ needs and concerns are addressed.

Our Vision

• A great public school for every student.

Our Mission

• Advocate for education professionals, unite our members and the nation to fulfill the promise of public education and prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.
Are you willing to make a difference in the life of a student?

[LOCAL NAME] is looking for educators to make a commitment to public education and their community.

The [LOCAL] is looking for educators who will actively join us to:

- **Advocate for High Standards for Educators**
  Educators have a voice in determining the standards for teaching and learning and help our students have access to resources that students, educators, and communities deserve.

- **Invest in Your Professional Development**
  Your Association sponsors workshops and seminars that are available to all members— from new to veteran teachers and ESPs that seek to build skills and expertise that help you to become a stronger leader in your profession.

- **Advocate for Your Profession**
  Every day, your professional association and its members advocate for policies that affect your profession, your standards, your classrooms, even your buses and cafeterias. We tackle issues ranging from school funding and modernization to salaries and working conditions.

- **Connect to Your Community**
  Education is a collaborative process involving educators, parents, and the community. When you join, you are joining a network of education advocates working to move a pro-public education agenda.

For those willing to invest in public education, we want to meet you!

Join today and invest in your students, your community, and yourself!
EXPERIENCE ALL THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

NEA Member Benefits is thrilled you’ve decided to join the NEA – we hope you are, too!

Becoming a member of the Association gives you a powerful professional advocate through the collective voice of 3 million NEA members.

But the Association is also an advocate for your personal life. NEA Member Benefits offers programs and services designed to help you and your family live better and save money.

As soon as your enrollment information has been entered into the membership database, you will receive an email from NEA Member Benefits inviting you to explore all that we have to offer and to start taking advantage of your Association benefits!

As an NEA Member, you will have access to exclusive discounts and member-only offers, including:

- Up to 50% off on everything from vacations and clothes to restaurants and cell phones
- More cash back on the things you buy most with our member-only credit card
- Great deals on new and used cars. Members save an average of $2,973 off MSRP – and an average of $443 a year on auto insurance
- Free lesson plans and classroom tips, deeply discounted classroom supplies and 5% to 20% off continuing education through the NEA Academy
- Tons of information, resources and tools to help you make smart buying decisions

To Learn More Visit: www.neamb.com/backtoschool
Call Toll-Free: 800-637-4636
NEA and its affiliates have a host of tools and resources to make new members the best education professionals they can be:

**Education Votes**  
News for activists committed to advancing education policies focused on building great public schools and benefiting all students.  
www.edvotes.org  
/edvotes @EdVotes  
/speakuforkids  
/educationvotes

**NEA.org Tools and Ideas**  
This is where you’ll find lesson plans, activities, classroom management tips, advice and support.  
www.nea.org/ToolsAndIdeas

**GPS Network**  
Join to collaborate, advocate and organize to improve public education by leading a student-centered agenda.  
www.gpsnetwork.org

**Degrees Not Debt**  
Join a national campaign to help find solutions to this crisis of college affordability.  
www.nea.org/degreesnotdebt

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Keep up with the top education news through our monthly e-newsletter.  
www.nea.org/SignUpExpress

**Time 2 Learn/Time 2 Teach**  
Join a national campaign to put the focus of public education on student learning.  
www.nea.org/timetolearn

**Opportunity for All**  
Do you know a school or community where we must fight for equity and opportunity? Join the NEA Opportunity for All campaign to ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed.  
www.nea.org/opportunity

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**Back-to-School Organizing Resources**  
A site dedicated to assisting affiliates in developing a continuous engagement process well into the new school year.  
www.nea.org/BTSorganizing

**Back-to-School Guide**  
Educator-tested tips, advice, and resources for a successful start to the school year.  
www.nea.org/firstdays

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Serve as a Local Association representative at my school/worksite.

Hold a 10-minute meeting at my school/worksite as needed.

Sign up for the electronic Legislative Update, sent regularly to my home email address.

Attend a Local school board meeting with other Association members.

Assist with my Local Association communication outreach.

Provide support to my Local Association representative at my school/worksite.

The issues I’d like to organize around are:

1. 

2. 

3. 

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**WE NEED YOU:**  
**VOLUNTEER IN LOCAL ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES**

**NAME:**

**LOCAL:**

**ADDRESS:**

**CITY, STATE, ZIP:**

**HOME PHONE:**

**CELL PHONE:**

**HOME EMAIL:**